

DNREC seeking volunteers for Saturday, March 19 beach grass planting along Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean coastlines

Beach grass will help stabilize dunes hit hard by recent coastal storm; register by March 11

DOVER – DNREC is seeking volunteers for Delaware's annual beach grass planting event set for 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, March 19 at beach locations along the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Ocean. The event, now in its 27th year, helps protect Delaware shorelines by planting Cape American beach grass on sand dunes damaged by coastal storms.

Last year approximately 1,000 environmental enthusiasts, families and students planted 110,000 stems of beach grass along over 3 miles of coastline between Kitts Hummock Beach and Fenwick Island.

According to Jennifer Luoma, environmental scientist with DNREC's Shoreline and Waterway Management Section and coordinator of the event, volunteers are especially needed this year. "Delaware's coastline was ravaged by the January storm that weakened, and in some areas destroyed dunes and eroded sand from our beaches. The dunes were hit especially hard, and hundreds of volunteers are needed to help stabilize dunes that have been repaired after the coastal storm."

Volunteers are encouraged to sign up by March 11, 2016 either online at <http://de.gov/beachgrass> or by email to Jennifer.Luoma@delaware.gov. For more information, call 302-739-9921.

Sand dunes are essential for protection against damaging coastal storms. When sand dunes are destroyed, storm waves can rush inland, flood properties and put lives at risk. Stabilized dunes absorb wave energy and act as major sand storage areas, which replenish sand to eroded beaches during a storm.

Beach grass helps to build and stabilize dunes by trapping windblown sand. As the grass traps the sand, it builds the dunes higher and wider, which makes dunes more protective of the structures behind them. Since the program was introduced in 1989, more than 5 million stems of beach grass have been planted by dedicated volunteers.

DNREC's Shoreline and Waterway Management Section coordinates the annual beach grass planting event. The section also implements beach replenishment and erosion control projects along Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay communities to enhance, preserve and protect private and public beaches.

Media Contact: Melanie Rapp, Public Affairs, 302-739-9902

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